This study of the political economy of the Commonwealth Caribbean and the struggle for social transformation therein is an extremely ambitious project. It seeks to explore the avenues through which Guyana, Jamaica, and Grenada became sites of socialist experimentation in the 1970s and 1980s with the resultant intensification of superpower competition in these countries and the wider circum-Caribbean region. In addition, according to the author: "The study, beyond presenting a panoramic view of the socialist development strategies and U.S. interventionist policies in the Caribbean—in particular, Guyana, Jamaica, and Grenada—assesses and evaluates the impact of dependency, which continues to have lasting and devastating impact on the mainstream of political life in the region" (p. xix).

For the purposes of this study, the author provides a summary overview of the history of the region over the last five hundred years during which the Caribbean became an integral part, and cornerstone, of an Atlantic-centered global economy. The study explores the development of an indigenous intellectual tradition that seeks to describe and analyze the evolution, role, and structure of the Caribbean societies in the wider world. The author sees this tradition as located in the broader intellectual trends that have shaped the study of the contemporary international political economy—modernization and dependency. While the author seeks to anchor the study within these broader intellectual debates, the summary treatment of the evolution of the indigenous intellectual tradition in the Caribbean reflects a lack of intellectual engagement with the insights of thinkers like Derek Walcott, Vidia Naipaul, Martin Carter, et al., on both the history and evolution of Caribbean civilization. This gap is particularly evident in the author’s discussion of the political, cultural, and psychological dimensions of dependency in the Commonwealth Caribbean.

This failure to engage other streams of thought in Caribbean life leads to the extraordinary statement that “West Indians in general are unaware that cultural dependence exists because of its subtlety and, as a result, are not able to make distinctions regarding significant changes in the status quo” (p. 77). If West Indians “are not able to make distinctions regarding significant changes in the status quo,” then the question that arises is, Why did Caribbean activists/intellectuals such as Eric Williams, Arthur Lewis, C. L. R. James, Norman Manley, and Alexander Bustamante, among others, understand that they could change the context of Caribbean life by challenging the colonial order? Unfortunately, the author’s conception of dependency provokes uncertainty about his understanding of the agency of Caribbean people in reshaping the context of their lives. It also reflects a failure to understand that “nation-building” and “state formation”—the twin tasks confronting Caribbean societies exiting a colonial framework—are multi-generational goals that would require the inter-generational transfer of intellectual capital that is a prerequisite of all forms of institutional development. The construction of the colonial order in the Caribbean was a process of trial and error that took place over centuries. It should not be blithely assumed that the creation of institutions for a post-colonial order should be any different.

It is this lack of engagement with the context of Caribbean life that is a fundamental flaw of the study.
While the author has read a wide range of scholarly literature on the region, it is not evident that his familiarity with the literature translates itself into an understanding of the intricacies of political life in the territories that he studies. On various occasions, the author’s analysis conveys a rather formalistic quality that leads the reader to take issue with his assessments. For example, in the case of Guyana the author argues: “The restriction of freedom and the rigging of elections that accompanied the nationalization process were not conducive to the reduction of dependency, which was the primary goal of co-operative socialism” (p. 212). It is one of the paradoxes of Guyana’s political trajectory that, despite the tensions among Guyana’s ethnic communities, by the mid-1970s the two major parties—both professing to be socialist—had established an entente cordiale that foreclosed the development of other parties and political formations. In effect, should socialism in the Guyanese context be seen as a strategy for social transformation or was it about closing the political system in order to facilitate the dominance of the two main parties representing the major ethnic groups? In addition, to what extent was this closure of the political system a major stimulus to the population exodus from Guyana that over the next two decades would contribute to a net decline in the Guyanese population? In effect, it can be argued that the attempt to establish some version of socialism resulted in an even greater level of dependency as Guyanese human and intellectual capital migrated to escape the closure of the political system. One of the key questions that arise from the Guyanese experience is, Can social transformation occur under conditions where human capital is consistently exported?

This lack of clarity over the issue of dependency in the Caribbean and its relationship to the idea of social transformation is also evident in the author’s discussion of Jamaica. According to Rose, “The novel concept of democratic socialism was never free from profound ambiguities. It was a combination of capitalist and socialist socio-economic principles with parliamentary democracy as the mainstay of the political process in the country” (p. 219). It is a remarkable leap to describe democratic socialism as “novel” when its relationship to the wider international debates about social democracy in Europe and Latin America, and to Marxist-Leninist debates about non-capitalist strategies in Africa and Asia, is not elucidated in significant detail. The presumed novelty of democratic socialism is rendered even more problematic when the author goes on to describe Michael Manley, the leader of the People’s National Party which espoused the strategy of democratic socialism, as a Fabian socialist—like his father and predecessor, Norman Manley (p. 225). Later, the author describes Manley’s ideological orientation as “a social democrat, educated in the Fabian tradition at the London School of Economics and ... a strong admirer of the reformist policies of the British Labour government” (p. 245).

In his subsequent discussion of revolutionary socialism in Grenada, Rose asserts, “Marxism had been lost to the region with the voluntary exile of C. L. R. James and Richard Hart, while Soviet theorists in Cuba were isolated by the division imposed by colonialism and U.S. diplomatic and economic sanctions. In the Caribbean, the theory’s most prominent exponents were Trevor Munroe, Clive Thomas, Ralph Gonsalves, the NJM leadership, and Michael Manley.” This is an extraordinary assertion that raises fundamental questions about the author’s understanding of the historical evolution of radical politics in the Commonwealth Caribbean in the 1970s and 1980s. The failure to discuss the continuing role of Cheddi Jagan and the PPP in Guyana as a link to the Cuban regime and its evolution, and to discuss the return to Guyana of Walter Rodney and his role in the rise of the Working People’s Alliance (WPA) that challenged the Burnham-Jagan entente cordiale, reflect the author’s unsteady grasp of radical transnational politics in the Caribbean. One of the questions from this period that has yet to be satisfactorily answered is whether the overthrow of the Gairy regime in 1979 opened the door to the assassination of Walter Rodney in 1980. The New Jewel Movement in Grenada had come to power in 1979 by forcibly overthrowing the Gairy regime—the first coup in the Anglophone Caribbean. In 1979, the fragility of both the PPP and the PNC in Guyana was revealed by the unrest spearheaded by Rodney and the WPA and it was clear that the major parties faced an unprecedented challenge from another socialist party. Is it possible that the NJM’s success in Grenada created a determination on the part of the PNC leadership, among others, that Rodney should not replicate the NJM’s success?

In effect, while there is little to quibble about the author’s thesis that socialism in several guises emerged as a strategy of political and socio-economic transformation in these countries, it is not evident that the study helps readers to understand the limitations, both intellectual and in policy terms, of the strategies adopted by the various leaders in the 1970s and 1980s. The author’s analysis of the failure of the Grenadian project comes closest to offering a concrete explanation: “revolutionary socialism which embraced the Soviet theory of noncapitalist devel-
development and the principles of Marxist-Leninist doctrine was not a practical solution to develop Grenada’s fragile economy which continued to be sustained by foreign capital and North American tourists” (p. 339).

The author follows this observation with an entire chapter devoted to exploring the American efforts to reverse the shift towards socialist strategies in these countries, including the military intervention in Grenada by the Reagan administration in 1983. His analysis of the American efforts to sabotage these governments is less than complete, and the omission of any discussion of the American role in the ouster of Cheddi Jagan in 1964, with the collusion of the soi-disant socialist Forbes Burnham, again raises questions about the author’s grasp of the political history of the Commonwealth Caribbean. The reality, and preponderance, of American power in the Caribbean has been a critical factor in Caribbean politics for much of the twentieth century. Castro’s Cuba, by invoking Cuban nationalism and the support of the Communist countries, has escaped the yoke of American intervention. That critical space has provided the Cuban regime with an opportunity, afforded to few others, to pursue a strategy of social and economic transformation driven by state ownership and control over much of the country’s economy. Castro has also demonstrated a pragmatic and self-conscious strategy of geopolitics that has helped to buffer the hysteria that has driven American policies towards the regime.

In the Commonwealth Caribbean, the failure of the three socialist projects in the 1970s and 1980s reflected, in critical ways, the leaders’ lack of understanding of the geopolitical context of their societies and the difficulties that they would confront. It also reflected a failure to understand their own societies and the complexities therein. Social transformation in the Caribbean requires a level of historical understanding and engagement with the societies of the region and the socialist projects all collapsed because of the intellectual/cultural divergences between the leaders and their respective societies. Paradoxically, the search for socialist transformation increased levels of dependence in these societies upon external actors, for intellectual validation and for material resources to deal with the economic consequences of political decisions. In Guyana and Jamaica, there was massive financial and human capital flight from which these societies have yet to recover more than two decades later. In the case of Grenada, the self-immolation of the NJM led to the loss of an entire generation of leaders. It is this paradox of socialism as a strategy of social transformation that leads to increased dependence upon external actors that scholars of the Caribbean will have to re-examine in the twilight years of the regime that arose out of the Cuban revolution.

Euclid Rose has offered a useful start for the comparative analysis of socialism in the Caribbean and that initiative must be applauded. One hopes that future studies will dig deeper and offer more complex analyses of the comparative politics of these societies and the wider region.

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